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CANADIAN DEFENCE POLICY:
WHY A HISTORY OF REVERSALS?

An Individual Study Project
Intended for Publication

by

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ABSTRACT

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CANADIAN DEFENCE POLICY:
WHY A HISTORY OF REVERSALS?

An examination of Canadian defence policies from the post war years to the latest White Paper reveals a disconcerting cycle of reversals and setbacks. This trend shows no sign of abating because the root causes have yet to be addressed.

A SHORT HISTORY OF CANADIAN DEFENCE POLICY

At the end of the Second World War Canada found herself in an enviable position. She was a victorious ally and a major power with an unscathed industrial base on a continent defended by geography and an amicable neighbour. With a confidence that had been forged by war, Canada departed from the semi-isolationism of the 1930s and pursued "an active role in global diplomacy, adopting international stability and order as its goals."² With these national objectives Canada initially sought to promote security through the creation of multilateral arrangements, primarily the United Nations. To this end she was particularly active.

However, the immediate post war years record the emergence of the bi-polar tension between East and West and the necessity of Canada to align with proven allies. In February 1947 Canada and the United States formally agreed to co-operate in North

American defence. In that same year Canada became one of the first Western nations to advocate a trans-Atlantic pact.³ By 1949 the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had become a reality. The hoped for international stability and order that Canada saw being achieved through multilateral arrangements faded as the strategic realities of the nuclear age stalemated the United Nations.

If Canada had accurately assessed the impact of the atomic bomb as a catalyst for global distrust would she have acted differently? There was ample fore knowledge and time. From the outset of the Manhattan Project in 1942, Canada was one of the principal sources of refined uranium for chain-reaction experiments. Even if she was not aware of the eventual product--the atomic bomb, the whole world knew on 6 August 1945. Canada's postwar optimism in multilateral security was replaced by collective defence at the close of the decade.

The 1950s

In 1950 the greatest threat to Canadian security was the Soviet strategic bomber carrying an atomic bomb. It was reasoned that the best counter to this threat was air-to-air interception over the Canadian north. The military energies of the nation were soon devoted to the fabrication of an advanced jet interceptor--the AVRO Arrow. In retrospect it is difficult to

understand how Canada became committed to such an undertaking. An impartial assessment of emerging missile technology and the commercial reality that the United States would have to buy the jet to make it economically feasible, might have averted the policy reversals that hit later in the decade. The Conservative government of Prime Minister Diefenbaker cancelled the AVRO project in 1959, two years after the Soviets had demonstrated their intercontinental ballistic capability with Sputnik.

The 1960s

The theme of military policy not being in concert with strategic determinants continued into the 1960s. The military establishment pressed the Conservative government to accept tactical nuclear weapons for both continental defence and NATO.⁴ The issue resulted in the House of Commons passing a motion of no-confidence on Diefenbaker's government, and the government fell. This was the first time in Canadian history that a government experienced defeat due to a defence policy issue.⁵ In the election of April 1963 the Liberals won. Prime Minister Pearson then took steps to ensure his government would not be forced into a similar dilemma. Although Pearson "accepted responsibility for membership in a nuclear armed alliance"⁶ his commitment to unification and the restructuring of the Canadian Forces Headquarters served to diminish military influence on parliament hill. A military stance in the late 1950s, designed

to strengthen the Forces through the acquisition of tactical nuclear missiles, resulted in an erosion of the military's ability to voice its security concerns at the highest levels.⁷

The 1970s

The Department of Defence was still reeling from the effects of integration when Trudeau came to power. The 1971 White Paper on Defence, published as a result of Prime Minister Trudeau's major review of both foreign and defence policy, emphasized specific Canadian national interests. *"The Forces would serve as a symbol of independence, not simply as the measure of Canada's contribution to collective defence."*⁸ With the focus on sovereignty and the defence of North America, the NATO commitments were reduced substantially. The decade started with the focus on Canadian independence. But Prime Minister Trudeau's government did not appreciate the determinants that would reorder the priorities. Trudeau's tenure would end in 1984 with military policy oriented towards NATO and NORAD with negligible enhancements to sovereignty protection.

In following the 1971 Defence White Paper's first priority--the protection of Canadian sovereignty, the government focused its attention on ways to reduce the influence of its southern neighbour, and slow down continental integration.⁹ Contrary to written policy, that decade saw no additional resources for

strategic mobility--the essential element for Canadian continental defence, being acquired. There were no enhancements to air lift, sea lift, or the pre-positioning of vital over snow vehicles. Other than a major arctic exercise in the winter of 1971-1972¹⁰, which served to prove that arctic operations were at the best difficult, and inordinately expensive, the decade passed without the first defence priority being addressed.

In fact, an impartial observer would have to conclude that a reversal of priorities occurred. Long-Range Patrol/Anti-submarine warfare(ASW) aircraft (Aurora) were purchased for North Atlantic surveillance as part of Canada's contribution to NATO sea lanes protection. Leopard tanks were acquired for NATO assigned armour units, and the F-18A was selected to replace NATO and NORAD assigned fighter aircraft. Furthermore, Canada became a contributor and participant in NATO's Airborne Early Warning and Control program. It would have been very difficult for a Canadian officer in 1970 to imagine, that before the end of the decade, Trudeau would allow German and British armour battlegroups to train on the Canadian prairies. What caused the reversal from stated policy?

The 1980s

In 1984, the newly elected Prime Minister Mulroney directed his External Affairs Minister to conduct a review of Canada's

foreign relations. In May, 1985, the department released a discussion paper named "Competitiveness and Security"¹¹ The document was not well received and in true Canadian fashion a parliamentary committee was formed to study and incorporate other views. The final report released in June 1986, was called "Independence and Internationalism."¹² Chapter five of the report, entitled "Safeguarding International Peace and Security"¹³ provided the genesis of the defence policy, and led to the 1987 Defence White Paper "Challenge and Commitment."¹⁴ Unfortunately the authors had not anticipated the unravelling effects that the two Russian words--Glasnost and Perestroika would have on bi-polar tension. The promises of: creating a modern navy capable of operating under the Arctic Ocean (nuclear powered submarines); providing a more credible and sustainable contribution to central Europe (1 Canadian Division with new tanks and light tracked vehicles), and the revitalization of the reserves (a threefold expansion of Reserve strength to 90,000) were all placed in abeyance in 1989.

Canadian defence policy since World War II records a rocky road of reversals and setbacks. Some analysts explain this phenomenon as a by-product of Canada's sovereignty struggle against the dominance of the United States. Messieurs Middlemiss and Sokolsky state that "to govern is to choose, and despite all the readily apparent constraints, Canada's defence policies have been of Canada's own choosing..."¹⁵ Canada alone is responsible

for its defence policy. With the impending release of yet another defence review, it would be wise to reflect on probable causes.

There are three causes of the phenomenon of defence policy dissonance that need to be examined.

1. There is the failure to recognize the impact on policy of two competing ethical philosophies--idealism and realism.
2. There is the absence of a recognizable national strategy formulation process.
3. There is a weakness in the multidisciplinary approach to policy formulation.

IDEALISM AND REALISM

Canada prides itself in being a peace seeking and peace keeping nation. It is viewed by immigrants and refugees as an ideal haven, safe from the hostilities that plague the world. The Pacific, Arctic and Atlantic Oceans have isolated her to a large extent from global conflict. The nation's military history records involvement through choice and not necessity. The nurturing and protection of three democratic states in the last two hundred years: France, Britain, and United States have assured her of self-determination and civil liberty. This liberty without the onerous burdens of self-preservation and the

maintenance of world peace inspire an idealist ethic. This ethic when applied to defence issues, contends that "the pursuit of arms diminishes national security, prepares the way for military imbalances, and ultimately,[prepares] for warfare instead of peace." 16

The strength and influence of the idealist ethic in Canada is evidenced by the proliferation of peace groups. In 1985, this sparsely populated country reported an estimated 1000 "peace-movement" organizations with 300,000 members.¹⁷ The very fact that over 90 cities and the whole province of Manitoba have declared themselves as "nuclear-free zones"¹⁸ is a further manifestation of moral behaviour based on ethical idealism. How does this effect defence policy?

Defence policy flows from foreign policy which in turn is a composite of national views. The foreword of the 1986 foreign affairs report entitled "Independence and Internationalism" states that the committee decided to devote their time "listening to concerned citizens rather than government officials."¹⁹ Concerned citizens produced recommendations of:

1. *A mutually agreed and verifiable radical reduction of nuclear forces and associated measures to enhance strategic stability.*
2. *The maintenance and strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.*
3. *The negotiation of a global ban on chemical weapons.*

4. The achievement of a comprehensive test ban treaty that will be mutually verifiable.
5. The prevention of an arms race in outer space.
6. Agreement on confidence-building measures sufficient to permit the reduction of conventional military forces in Europe and elsewhere.²⁰

These recommendations reflect ethical idealist values. The report was true to the citizens who came forward and testified.²¹

Military policy is derived from foreign policy. Foreign policy responds to the citizens. Where does discord enter that causes government to cancel programs under public pressure?

Defence policy is shaped by military officers, of whom the majority are ethical realists. Realism is based on the moral principle of self-preservation.²² The realists' ethical framework leads to the conviction that peace requires preparing for war. The realist policy writer follows a set of rules that are best described by a scholar of ethics, Kegley.

The rules of the realist policy program may be reduced to the belief that a rational actor should always seek to increase capabilities; whereas it is better to negotiate than to fight, it is essential to fight rather than to fail to increase capabilities. This reasoning leads invariably to the quest for military superiority and the acceptance of arms and the arms races. To the realist, security is a function of power, power is a function of military capability, and peace is a function of a balance of power that will emerge if all states act in compliance with these rules.²³

The 1986 foreign policy paper reflects the idealist ethic. The 1987 defence policy has been written by the realist ethic. The government responds to the wishes of the people, predominantly an idealistic ethic. The senior decision makers of both External and Defence ministries interface with nations whose foreign and defence policy are predominantly based on realist principles.²⁴ This is the tension that skews Canadian defence policy. The challenge to the military and foreign affairs officer is to acknowledge the ethical tension that exists in the policy formulation system and to search for a value system that accommodates the best of idealism and realism. Failure to do so will contribute to the cyclical perturbations that afflict Canadian defence policy.

THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FORMULATION PROCESS

Aside from throne speeches, the government of Canada does not publish an identifiable national strategy. The Hockin committee responsible for foreign policy observed this fact. "Without a clear indication of government policy, it is hard for the public to be confident that Canada's national interests are being taken into account...Canada is skirting the edges of important issues of strategic policy."²⁵

The last two words of the quote--strategic policy, underscore the difficulty Canadian decision makers have with the terms strategy and policy. National strategy is not the instrument of policy. In fact the reverse is true. National strategy provides the guiding framework within which the pieces of policy fit.²⁶ National strategy is defined as "*the art and science of developing and using the political, economic, and psychological powers of a nation, together with its armed forces, during peace and war, to secure national objectives.*"²⁷ Policy, as used in the Canadian context, means a general plan of action based on current realities. National strategy is the engine. Policy is the drive train. A national strategy precedes foreign policy, defence policy and military strategy or, for that matter, any other government policy whether economic, technological etc.

A nation with an over-arching national strategy is better able to control policies. Synergism flourishes when harmony of purpose exists. National strategy focuses energies and informs decision makers of long term national purposes. Strategy provides stability. Japan has been a long practitioner of national strategy formulation. The principles of the 1927 Tanaka²⁸ Memorial [Strategy]--domination through infiltration and unified multiple control, have served that nation well. Although not in the public domain, there is much evidence that Japan is currently guided by a national strategy. Policies emanating from

her principle Ministries are in harmony and enduring. The Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) has transformed the nation into an economic superpower because its policies support and are guided by a national strategy.

Only recently America came to the realization that it too lacked a coherent method for formulating strategy. Senator Sam Nunn, Chairman of the Committee on Armed Services expressed America's concerns at the 1987 Hearings on National Security Strategy.²⁹ "There is no rational system whereby the Executive Branch and the Congress reach coherent and enduring agreement on national military strategy, the forces to carry it out and the funding that should be provided in light of the overall economy and competing claims on national resources."³⁰ As a result of the hearings congress enacted legislation that compelled the President to publish a national security strategy.

Although not a panacea, the American President's 1988 statement on national security strategy³¹, does provide clear guidance to the Departments of Defence, State and the National Security Council. All Americans now have a common document which clearly enunciates common objectives and unites effort. The document serves as a textbook to other nations, outlining the necessary elements of national and security strategy. They are:

- a. Values and beliefs;
- b. National interests;

- c. Objectives in support of interests;
- d. Strategic appraisal (both domestic and global);
- d. National policies in the use of the elements of national power, (Diplomatic, Economic, Military, Space, Intelligence);
- e. Regional strategies and the all important,
- f. Resource allocation.

This list serves as a starting point from which military objectives, concepts and resources can be determined, assessed and revised until a military strategy forms. Some of these issues are partly addressed in Canadian foreign and defence policy papers, but Canada has no root document that addresses the elements vital to the formulation of a national security strategy; nor is there an identifiable staff tasked with the mandate to create and harmonise the diplomatic, military, economic and intelligence elements of security strategy.

This is Canada's situation. A parliamentary system may achieve consensus in a different manner than that of a republican democracy but the problem remains. There is no staff system whereby cabinet and parliament develop national strategies. Certain departments produce policy guidelines but an overall guiding process for the formulation of national strategies is found lacking. By default, the Department of External Affairs takes the lead and provides guidance to the Department of

National Defence. The weakness in the current approach results in policy being shaped by two interest groups--the political science officers of External Affairs and the military officers. The lack of a true multidisciplinary approach to the formulation of national and security strategy introduces the third weakness.

THE MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO STRATEGY

Contemporary Canadian defence policy is largely shaped by politico-military realities. This approach accurately accounts for current conditions but runs into the trap of being short lived in an ever changing world. A truly visionary and lasting policy needs to assess more than the political and military determinants. "Challenge and Commitment" the latest defence policy makes no mention of the influence of technology, economics or socio-psychological factors. This document appears to ignore the multidisciplinary approach to security and condemns itself to a short life. The 1989 strategic appraisal of the Pacific region warns the Pacific Command Staff of this same oversight. *"Current threats tend to be military; future threats are more multidimensional"*³² Canadian security issues need to be seen through the lens of economists and physical scientists, or technologists, as well as political scientists and military officers.³³

Could a scientist in 1942 who was familiar with chain-reaction experimentation have predicted the resulting bi-polar tension that has dominated defence policy since 1949? Could a technologist with a knowledge of rocket propulsion and inertial guidance systems in the late 1940s have alerted the government to the dangers of building an advanced jet interceptor in the 1950s while the acknowledged enemy fabricated an ICBM? If the technologist's eyes missed the emerging trend, where was the economist with the assessment of market share and unit cost studies? If not the scientist or the economist then the political scientist should have been aware of the USAF and US air industries' intent of being pre-eminent in aerospace design.

The march towards miniaturization--smaller rocket motors, low mass, high acceleration gyroscopes and smaller yield warheads--the tactical nuclear weapon, precipitated the demise of the Diefenbaker government. A multidisciplinary team may have predicted this outcome and avoided the embarrassment and reversals of the 1960s.

The decade of the 1970s will be heralded as the dawn of the microprocessor. In 1971 Intel succeeded in putting the entire central processing unit (CPU) of a computer on a single chip. Now digital terrain mapping radars and inertial guidance systems guide cruise missiles through a thousand miles of terrain while other on board CPUs meter the fuel of highly efficient miniature

turbine engines. The application of 1970s technologies fuelled the dramatic modernization of Soviet strategic and conventional forces. Soviet quantity became quality during the Trudeau years and contributed to the reversal of the 1971 defence priorities. Could the impact of the CPU on Canadian defence policy been anticipated? A multidisciplinary team could have identified the trend.

The 1980s witnessed a massive explosion in the availability of information storage and transmittal systems brought about by relatively simple advances in technology. The more powerful of these in the public domain are the camcorder, the videocassette recorder and the facsimile machine. These technologies permitted the East to observe the West without censorship and allowed the East Bloc citizens to develop a consensus as they compared societies. It was the rapid exchange of ideas by electronic means--micro computers linked by telephone lines, that gave birth to the term "software superpower" and moved economic competition out of the reach of the industrial based Comecon nations.³⁴ The fear of being left out of the "Information Age" and the realization that the very structures and institutions created by Leninist-Marxists ideologies barred the way, served as the impetus to Glasnost and Perestroika. The advancement of technology contributed to another revolution--an economic one in the East, eased East-West tensions and shortened the life of Canada's 1987 defence policy. The real shame was that the

revolution of Eastern Europe began in 198535--the year that Canada was wrestling with its foreign policy and two years prior to the release of its defence policy. Perhaps a technologist and an economist could have foretold the events of 1989, when the political scientist and military analyst failed.

THE INFLUENCE OF ECONOMICS & TECHNOLOGY ON NATIONAL SECURITY

Technological nationalism and financial power are emerging as equals to political will and military power in the global power equation. Canada's military budget is hostage to the nation's deficit. The indebtedness of the nation is 80% held by its citizens and 20% by foreign banks but the trend is accelerating towards offshore borrowing.³⁶ The encompassing threat of foreign control over the economy and technological investment is far more subtle and complex than traditional military posturing.

Canada functions on a diversified economy but a large segment of her trade depends on the export of raw materials. As aluminium, steel and copper are replaced with epoxies, plastic and optical fibres made from sand, Canada's reliance on commodity trading comes into jeopardy. A weakened Canadian economy will further curtail the resources required for implementing any national security strategy.

The proliferation of advanced technologies could endanger Canada's security. Developing nations are obtaining the means to launch long range attacks against adversaries. Canada's earlier decision not to participate in the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) is likely to need re-examination. SDI can be faulted for not providing total protection against massive nuclear fires, but it does provide insurance against irrational random launches.

The experiences of the last fifty years have taught us that the scientific break-through of today will impact on the security strategies of tomorrow. The strategist must operate in the margin of time between research's discovery and engineering's application if he is to be effective in contributing to the national security strategy.

The technologist and the economist need to join the strategy formulation team. The multidisciplinary approach to determining strategy is essential from now on. The nation may have been able to afford their absence in the past. This is no longer true.

SUMMARY

Canada's defence policy continues to experience reversals as evidenced by the historical record. The primary cause can be attributed to three elements: one, the tension between the idealist and realist ethic; two, the absence of an identifiable national security strategy and the system to create it, and three, the need to incorporate a multidisciplinary approach to security strategy.

Canada's geography has afforded her protection against physical threats. However, the prophesied "global village" of Marshall McLuhan is here. The opportunity to control national destinies more subtly and more effectively than ever before has arrived. Isolation and good allies have allowed Canada to endure defence policy reversals to date with no great losses. The future will be different. National security strategy developed by visionaries and endorsed by the nation will become critical. Without a strategy the nation may suffer more than a defence policy reversal. Canada could lose control of her destiny.

END NOTES

1. At the end of World War II, Canada had almost one million men under arms and the world's third largest navy.
2. Middlemiss D.W. and J.J. Sokolsky, Canadian Defence: Decisions and Determinants, Toronto, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989, p.16.
3. Ibid., p. 18.
4. Honest John missiles in Europe, Bomarc surface-to-surface missiles in Canada and the Genie air-to-air missile for interceptors assigned to NORAD.
5. Middlemiss and Sokolsky, pp. 26-27.
6. Canada, Department of National Defence, White Paper on Defence, Ottawa, Queen's Printer for Canada, 1964, p. 13.
7. See Critchley Harriet, "Civilianization and the Canadian Military," Armed Forces and Society, Vol. 16, Fall 1989, pp. 117-136 for a full description of the impact of the 1968 unification followed by the 1972 integration of the military and civilian headquarters. Critchley advocates that civilianization of the defence department is not the cause of lessened influence, but that the process of unification and integration threw senior military officers into a survival mode for the next two decades.
8. Attributed to the 1971 defence "White Paper."
9. Sharp, Mitchell: Minister of External Affairs, "Canada-U.S. Relations: Options for the Future," International Perspectives (Autumn 1972), pp.1-24.
10. Exercise Patrouille Nocturne was undertaken by the 5ieme Groupement de Brigade north of Frobisher Bay on Baffin Island from end December 1971 to early March 1972.
11. Clark, Joe, The Right Honourable. Competitiveness and Security: Directions for Canada's International Relations. (Supply and Services Canada) Ottawa, 1985.
12. Hockin, Tom and Jean-Maurice Simard. Independence and Internationalism: A Report of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and of the House of Commons on Canada's International Relations, June 1986.
13. Ibid., pp. 47-64.
14. Beatty, Perrin, Minister of National Defence. Challenge and Commitment: A Defence Policy for Canada, (Supply and Services Ottawa), June 1987.

15. Middlemiss and Sokolosky, p. 228.
16. Kegley, Charles W. Jr., "Neo-Idealism: A Practical Matter," Ethics and International Affairs, Carnegie Council on Ethics & International Affairs, Volume 2, 1988, p. 18.
17. Thompson Wayne, "Canadian Defence Policy," Current History: A World Affairs Journal, Vol. 87, March 1988, p. 130.
18. Thompson, p. 129.
19. Independence and Internationalism, p. 3.
20. Independence and Internationalism, p. 52.
21. On balance it must be mentioned that the report also contains goals based on realist values.
22. Kegley, p.17.
23. Kegley, pp. 17-18.
24. Kegley, p. 2. "The realist world view is without question the dominant paradigm in the practice of world affairs."
25. Ibid p.47.
26. Foster Gregory, Institute for National Strategic Studies, before the Committee on Armed Services US Senate, 100th Congress, 12 January 1987, p.162.
27. Joint Chief of Staff (JCS) Pub.1: Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms. Washington: U.S. Department of Defence, 1 June 1987, p. 244.
28. Premier Tanaka, The Tanaka Memorial, 25 July 1927. Translated into english by L.T. Chen, 1 September 1929. Original held by US Army War College. This strategy outlines the colonization of the Far East by Japan. This document remains controversial and upsetting to the Japanese because it acknowledges an earlier strategic plan (Meiji) and concurs with Emperor Meiji's conclusion--Japan must first defeat the US before controlling China. The first phase of the plan is to dominate economics and communications in Manchuria prior to military intervention. One is cautioned in applying the concepts of the plan to modern day Japan.
29. National security strategy is a term to denote that the strategy has incorporated all elements of power necessary for the security of the nation. It is in harmony with the national strategy and it guides military strategy.

30. From NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services United States Senate, One Hundredth Congress; First Session, 12 January 1987, Opening Statement, p.3.

31. National Security Strategy of the United States, The White House, January 1988. Ronald Reagan.

32. Winnefeld James, "New Thinking": Different Perspectives Of Pacific Rim Security Issues, Oct 1989, RAND Corporation, Contract WD-4605-USPACOM.

33. Other disciplines need to be added. In order to keep the essay to a manageable length the emphasis is restricted to the economist and technologist.

34. Comecon: Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. All Warsaw Pact nations and a number of Asian communist states belong to this economic trading block.

35. Goldman, Marshall. "The Future of Soviet Economic Reform" Soviet Military Policy: Current History, October, 1989, p.329.

36. Daly John and David Todd, "Interesting Times", Macleans, Vol. 103, 5 March 1990, pp.36-37.